

# News Release



## Pacific Southwest Region

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### **Coleman National Fish Hatchery Repeats Process of Transporting Up to 12 Million Juvenile Salmon**

Sacramento – For the second year in a row, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the Coleman National Fish Hatchery will begin a process this week that could result in approximately 12 million Chinook salmon smolts being trucked and released near the ocean, carrying out details of a special 2015 drought contingency plan. The Chinook smolts, 3 inches in length, have been raised at the Coleman hatchery in Anderson, Calif., as part of the federal hatchery's role in partially mitigating for Shasta and Keswick dams on the upper Sacramento River.

Coleman NFH will transport the Chinook salmon smolts until mid-May from the hatchery to three sites on the lower Sacramento River more than 180 miles away: Rio Vista, Mare Island, and San Pablo Bay. Once transported, the smolts will be placed in net pens operated by the Fishery Foundation of California for acclimatization and then released.

Coleman NFH smolts are typically released on-site into Battle Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento River, so that they complete the imprinting cycle during their outmigration to the ocean. But for the second year in a row, a severe drought in the Central Valley of California has produced conditions in the Sacramento River and Delta detrimental to the survival of juvenile salmon. To avoid unacceptably high levels of juvenile fish mortality that may result in 2015, this release strategy will improve the chances of an ocean harvest opportunity.

“Trucking our juvenile salmon to the Bay-Delta is not normal procedure for Coleman National Fish Hatchery, but due to the drought, it is the best option we have this year,” said Robert Clarke, Fisheries Program Supervisor for the USFWS Pacific Southwest Region. “Trucking juveniles drastically increase straying and reduces adult returns to the upper river and hatchery. However, if we were to release our fish at the hatchery under the current drought conditions, it is very likely we would not get enough adults back to meet our egg needs three years from now.”

Last year, under almost identical drought conditions impacting the normal Battle Creek release site, USFWS ended up trucking and releasing approximately 7.5 million smolts. A late-March storm improved conditions near the hatchery, and approximately 4.5 million smolts were able to be released on-site.

The operation will be one of coordination and collaboration between the USFWS, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Fishery Foundation of California. If triggers are met in the coming months and all 12 million salmon are trucked from Coleman, the effort will take 22 non-consecutive days, using up to six USFWS and CDFW trucks each day. Each truck holds up to 2,800 gallons of water and each can carry up to 130,000 smolts at water temperatures between 55-60 degrees.

Coleman National Fish Hatchery was constructed in 1942 as part of the mitigation measures to help preserve significant runs of Chinook salmon threatened by the loss of natural spawning areas resulting from the construction of Shasta and Keswick dams on the upper Sacramento River. One of the primary goals of the hatchery is to assure salmon will return to the upper Sacramento River as adults to contribute to the upper Sacramento in-river fishery, and return to the hatchery in sufficient numbers to perpetuate the runs. Another important goal of the hatchery is to contribute to the ocean sport and commercial fishery. Coleman NFH contributes up to 100,000 Chinook annually to the ocean fisheries as well as thousands of fish for the fisheries in the Sacramento River.

Links to key documents:

- The 2015 USFWS Contingency Plan:  
[http://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/documents/Contingency\\_Release\\_Strategies\\_2015\\_for\\_Coleman\\_National\\_Fish\\_Hatchery\\_03\\_19\\_15\\_Final.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/documents/Contingency_Release_Strategies_2015_for_Coleman_National_Fish_Hatchery_03_19_15_Final.pdf)
- USFWS photos from the 2014 salmon trucking operation:  
[https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws\\_pacificsw/sets/72157651381858596/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/sets/72157651381858596/)

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